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Existential constructions

A semasiological perspective*

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Existential constructions are normally defined as sentences in which some entity is associated with some location giving rise to the so-called locative paradigm which also involves the locative and the possessive construction (cf. Freeze 2001). In spite of the apparent simplicity of this approach, the assumption of an allegedly universal locative paradigm leaves unaccounted a broad variety of languages in which existential constructions cannot be straightforwardly related to the locative onomasiological format. In these languages, existential constructions arise as a consequence of complex grammaticalization changes, which start from different source constructions. In this paper, a semasiological perspective is adopted, which aims at sketching a brief typology of the possible source constructions giving rise to existential constructions.

Einen Gott, den es gibt, gibt es nicht.

‘There is no God which exists’

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*)

* Parts of this paper were developed in joint work with Katherina Stathi (University of Hannover) and presented at the Workshop on Variation and Change in Argument Realization (Naples and Capri, 27.-30.5.2010). I thank all colleagues and friends who attended the meeting as well as Elly van Gelderen and especially one anonymous reviewer for their active discussion of the paper, which has greatly benefited from their kind suggestions and remarks. Needless to say, I carry the full responsibility for the views expressed and the errors remaining in the paper. The following abbreviations are used: ACC = accusative, ADE = adessive, CL = classifier, COND = conditional, COP = copula, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, d-PART = deictic particle, EC = existential construction, EVID = evidential, F = feminine, FUT = future, GEN = genitive, ILL = illative, INDEF = indefinite, INE = inessive, INF = infinitive, INTR = intransitive, LOC = locative, M = masculine, N = neuter, NEG = negation, NOM = nominative, OBL = oblique, PAR = partitive, PASS = passive, PL = plural, PRED = predicate, PROG = progressive, PRS = present, PST = past, PTCP = participle, REL = relative, SG = singular, SS = same subject switch reference marking, SUBJ = subjunctive, TR = transitive, VCM = verb class marker.

1. Existential constructions and the onomasiological perspective

Existential constructions (= ECs) are characterized as those constructions which “normally describe some entity associated with some location” (Freeze 2001:941). In this sense, Freeze (2001) adopts the so-called locative paradigm in which to ECs is assigned what in the lexicological tradition can be termed a basic onomasiological format, because it takes as a starting point the naming act (cf. Lipka 2002:x):

- (1) LOC BE ENTITY_[-definite]

LOC stands for a locative expression associated with BE which predicates the existence of the ENTITY, normally realized by an indefinite nominal. The onomasiological format asks for the possible constructions employed as its implementation. Notice that in this onomasiological format existence derives by inference from the basic locative construction: If an entity occupies a certain space, then it exists (cf. Lakoff 1987:470 among many others). This inference is implicitly motivated by the generally accepted universal primacy of the spatial dimension underlying the locative expression.

The onomasiological approach has the advantage of allowing a cross-linguistic comparison of those constructions which basically predicate the existence of an entity by means of a locative construction. In fact, this is the approach also adopted by Clark (1978) in her investigation of ECs in the Universals project led by Greenberg. In a sense, Clark finds out what she is looking for, namely ECs encoded by locative expressions (or in her terms: locationals) in the absolute majority (actually the totality) of the languages investigated in her sample. Only two exceptions are found which violate this generalization: the French/Greek/Spanish type in which the possession verb HAVE occurs, and the Classical Arabic type in which the passive(-resultative) form of the achievement verb FIND occurs, namely *yūjadu* ‘to be found’, and is defined as “inherently locative” by Clark. This provides further solid empirical support to the generally accepted claim that the spatial (locative) dimension is basic for encoding several other dimensions, for instance possession, and also for stating the existence of an entity via the inference mentioned above.

On the other hand, the onomasiological format has been taken literally as a basic ingredient of Universal Grammar, an essential piece of the human cognitive endowment (cf. Freeze 2001). Against this universalistic interpretation, which is very much indebted with what Croft (2003:5) calls the rationalist approach to language universals, in this paper we will try to provide a brief typology of ECs from the opposite semasiological perspective which takes the perspective of decoding names. Assuming a diachronically oriented viewpoint, the semasiological approach aims to provide a typology of the source constructions which give rise to ECs. This typology allows

us to reconstruct those cognitive processes of meaning extension and generalization which are at the heart of the genesis of grammar (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2007 for a general picture).

In §2 we discuss Freeze's rationalist approach, which tries to reduce the multifaceted variety of ECs to a unifying, abstract format couched within an X-bar framework. Against such a unifying view, in §3 the semasiological method is opposed, which provides a different typology based on the source constructions giving rise to ECs. Finally, §4 draws some conclusions and suggests some possible developments of the approach sketched out in the paper.

2. E pluribus unum

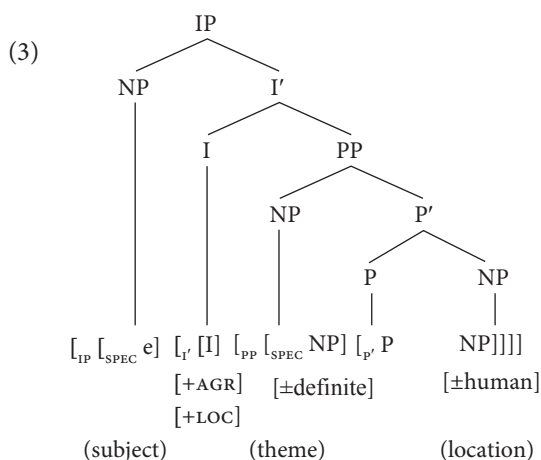
In the chapter of the influential survey on *Language Typology and Language Universals* devoted to the ECs, Freeze (2001) gives expression to the unifying view *par excellence* by means of his tripartite locative paradigm which, besides the EC, comprises a locative and a possessive predication resulting from the manipulation of the three basic ingredients introduced in (1) above:

- (2) a. existential predication: LOC BE ENTITY_[−definite]
- b. locative predication: ENTITY_[+definite] BE LOC
- c. possessive predication: LOC_[+human] BE(/HAVE) ENTITY

From an epistemological point of view, the interest of this approach lies in the fact that in this way we can map a more complex (or better: specific) domain onto a more general and basic one. Or, in other terms, we don't need to assume a basic EC in the same sense as we normally assume a basic locative construction.

This cannot be denied, of course, but the generalization resulting from the onomasiological approach should not be stretched as far as to claim that the locative paradigm plays a central role at the UG-level as suggested by Freeze (2001). In his account, the phrase structure schema in (3), a variant of the general X-bar schema, constitutes the “universal underlying structure” which “accounts for the locative paradigm” (Freeze 2001: 947):¹

1. For other recent accounts of existentials in connection with possession and location within the generative framework, see in particular Hazout (2004) and den Dikken (2006).



In particular, the subject position is taken to be empty (*e*); the predicate phrase is taken to consist in a prepositional phrase (PP) overtly or abstractly and contains in its specifier the theme argument; finally, “the copula arises in I and consists of morphological and syntactic features which ... includes [sic!] a locative feature” (2001:947).

Syntactic movement, triggered by the properties of the single components of the phrase structure, is taken to be responsible for the different possible realizations which are derivations from the underlying universal structure. Namely, if the theme is indefinite, the P' moves to the empty specifier position of IP yielding the EC; if the latter is specified for the feature [+human], then the EC receives a possessive interpretation, and so on, sentence after sentence, language after language. In addition, notice that Freeze (2001:947) “assume[s] that the copula is given phonological form at P[honetic] F[orm] ... The actual form of the copula in particular languages is *subject to the usual unpredictable irregularity* [emphasis mine, LG]”. Finally, one has to “keep in mind that the derivations ... apply within the (universal) grammar, not in a particular language; particular languages will instantiate various possible surface structures”.

In a way, this analysis represents a masterpiece of what Croft (2003:5) calls the rationalist approach to language and language universals. In fact, it rests on a number of assumptions which characterize generative linguistics as a school of thought. What I called above the basic onomasiological format – which is also at the heart of the other main school of thought, the functional-typological approach, as will be discussed in the next section – is interpreted in purely syntactic terms as a universal abstract (semanto-)syntactic frame on the basis of which all languages are taken to derive their own specific implementations. Variation is minimized: notice the additional specification on the form of the copula subject to the usual unpredictable irregularity and left to the low performance level of PF.

Less clear is the second additional specification reported above concerning the level of universal grammar at which the frame should be applied regardless of the

particular languages which instantiate possible surface structures. If I understand it correctly, this means that the movement rules accounting for the different existential, locative and possessive predications are to be interpreted at an abstract, actually universal, level, again independently of how they are subsequently implemented in the real languages. This makes the whole account even more abstract.

In sum, in the generative school the onomasiological format is syntacticized; language variation is kept to a minimum by disregarding any specific implementation of the abstract schema; the lexical-morphological level is similarly disregarded as a surface (PF-level) phenomenon, unpredictable and irregular; the cost to be paid is the abstractness of the structure, which is even difficult to falsify as a working hypothesis because it totally abstracts away from any concrete implementation.

3. The semasiological perspective

On the other hand, I said above that the onomasiological approach also underlies the other main approach to language and language universals, what Croft (2003) calls the empiricist view. In contrast to the rationalist view, however, the onomasiological approach, which generally serves to “[d]etermine the particular semantic(- pragmatic) structure or situation type” at issue, must be balanced by its semasiological counterpart, which amounts to “examin[ing] the morphosyntactic construction(s) or **strategies** used to **encode** that situation type” (original emphasis, Croft 2003: 14). In other words, the crosslinguistic investigation should be crucially oriented towards the search of semasiological correspondences of the onomasiological format. Observe that this is not denied by Freeze’s rationalist approach sketched above, which also collects data of possible realizations of the allegedly universal locative paradigm. As pointed out above, however, a convinced rationalist treats all this evidence as the implementation of a universal abstract frame, whereas an empiricist is interested in what this evidence really represents, namely the collection of different constructions expressing – to a certain extent to be further specified below – the basic onomasiological format in (1).

In fact, a semasiological perspective is essentially constructionist, given its interest in coding strategies. From this viewpoint, ECs result from the grammaticalization of other (more basic) constructions. Given the basic nature of the spatial dimension, many ECs occurring in the world’s languages reflect this phylogeny, as shown by Clark’s (1978) survey mentioned above. Thus, in semasiological terms the mapping of the more specific existential domain onto the more general spatial dimension accomplished via the onomasiological format seen above opens the door for the diachronic perspective of grammaticalization to set in. In this sense, ECs result from other more basic constructions via a process of abstraction, i.e. meaning generalization

or technically speaking semantic bleaching, typical of grammaticalization changes (cf. Hopper & Traugott 2003: 94 for a survey).

Notice that the semasiological perspective makes explicit what in the generative school is tacitly assumed, namely the parallel between the synchronic mechanism of derivation and the diachronic dimension of evolution. Thus, in the generative approach an EC synchronically (i.e. in real time) derives from the basic locative predication, while in the semasiological perspective an EC may have evolved – in this sense: derives – from an originally locative construction. This reminds us of an old question within generative linguistics which has been hotly debated again in connection with the problem of abstractness (and opacity) in phonology (cf. Kiparsky 1982 among others).

Given the constructional approach opened by the semasiological perspective, the criteria for assessing the status of an EC are construction-specific. In this sense, the semasiological point of view is totally opposed to the universal appeal of the rationalist approach. Thus, taking for granted the basic locative construction, only if the spatial marker is bleached, can an EC be found as *There is a problem here*, in which the occurrence of two opposed deictic particles does not give rise to an ungrammatical sentence, because the first one is bleached in the EC. Clearly, the EC is fixed because the two particles cannot be inverted: **Here is a problem there*.

One advantage of this approach is that it does not exclude that other sources of the ECs besides the primary locative domain are possible (although less common). Moreover, it aims to relate explicitly the synchronic and the diachronic perspective by making generalizations concerning the source constructions and their diachronic development. In this perspective, we will repeatedly observe below that the morphemes involved in ECs give rise to what in grammaticalization studies is called layering, namely “the persistence of older forms and meanings alongside newer forms and meanings, whether derived by divergence from the same source or by renewal from different sources” (cf. Hopper & Traugott 2003: 124). Accordingly, we will find on the one hand the case of the same morpheme involved in an EC and in other constructions with a different value (as is dramatically the case of the Lëtzebuergesch verb *ginn* ‘to give’ in §3.2 below), and on the other the occurrence of several constructions displaying an existential value, as shown for instance by the Brazilian Portuguese ECs discussed below. This latter example is particularly interesting from the point of view of grammaticalization because the layering of different ECs results from the multiple grammaticalization of different predicates within the source domain of possession.

On the other hand, “[g]rammaticalization tends to undermine the picture of stability, of clear categorial boundaries, and of structured groups of forms, showing these to be at the most temporary way-stations between different kinds of dispersal, emergence, and fragmentation” (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 165). This fragmentation is however not chaotic: Rather, the spectrum of meanings covered by an EC can be

synchronically accounted for by making use of semantic maps of the kind advocated by Haspelmath (2003), whose further advantage is the possibility of projecting the semantic space associated with an EC in a certain language onto a cross-linguistic dimension (cf. Croft 2003: 133 for a discussion). I will come back to this point towards the end of the paper.

Thus, taking as a starting point the onomasiological format and looking for its semasiological implementations, this paper will try to provide a typology of what the possible source constructions of ECs are and what their impact is on their synchronic status. In this light, elaborating on the onomasiological format in (1) we can assume at least three possible variables:

- (4) a. Type of particle
- b. Type of predicate
- c. Type of entity

Under the generic term particle – to be further specified below – I mean what in the onomasiological format is given under the locative expression, because the domain of spatial location does not necessary exhaust the possible range of meanings conveyed by the morphemes occurring in the ECs. Besides the particle a predicate is mostly involved; notice however that either the particle or the predicate can be absent in an EC, as respectively shown by Hausa (5a) (cf. Abdoulaye 2006: 1123) and Rural Palestinian Arabic (5b) (cf. Hoyt 2000: 34):

- (5) a. *Dà haskee.*
 exist light
 ‘There is light’.
- b. *u-yâma fîh nâs mǧaffalîn u-hubul*
 and-oh:how in:it people gullible:M:PL and-stupid:M:PL
 ‘And oh, how there are gullible and stupid people!’

Anticipating somewhat what will be shown in the following section, we can observe that the generalization holds that the normal occurrence of expletives in a language is a good predictor of the presence of a particle in the EC of that language, but not viceversa, namely ECs may require the presence of a particle in languages not normally displaying expletives, e.g. in Italian:

- (6) a. *C’è nebbia.*
 there-is fog
 ‘There is fog’.
- b. *È nebbia.*
 is fog
 ‘It is fog’.

Similar observations hold for the copula (cf. Francez 2007: 10–11). Moreover, in Maori the EC seems to make use only of the variable ENTITY accompanied by the (in) definiteness marker, thus dispensing us both with the particle and the predicate (Bauer 1997: 34):

- (7) *He taniwha.*
 a taniwha
 ‘There are taniwhas.’

Finally, the ENTITY encodes the type of entity occurring in a EC, whether it has to be [\pm definite], etc. The typology surveyed below does not aim at being exhaustive, and it has to be stressed that a link with the locative constructions will crop up quite often.

ECs are generally expanded by means of a coda, normally constituted by a locative phrase:

- (8) *There was a cop in the room/available/eating a donut.*

Besides locatives, a coda can actually be formed by any kind of modifier and there does not seem to be any compelling argument for assuming “a single category covering all material occurring to the right of the pivot” (Francez 2007: 17). Although Francez is right in treating the locative coda as an expansion with regard to the basic EC, nevertheless the latter normally arise by dropping the coda from a sentence containing the locative expression, as shown for instance by Russian in which the copula can only be omitted if a locative expression is there (cf. Francez 2007: 10):

- (9) a. *Na stole (jest') kniga.*
 on table COP book
 ‘There is a book on the table’.
 b. *Kniga *(jest').*
 book COP
 ‘There is a book’.

In this regard, Heine (1997: 98–99) draws attention to the developmental pattern, whereby a Location Schema like *Y is at X* normally gives rise to an EC *Y exists* by dropping the locative complement, which in its turn can be further developed into a possessive construction if the only argument receives a genitival modifier. This development is testified by Bisa, in which the possessive construction resembles an EC like *X’s Y exists*:

- (10) a. *A ta m par-o.*
 he exist my house-at
 ‘He is at my house’.

- b. *Wusu ta-w.*
God exist-s
- c. *moʊ lu ta-w.*
my wife exist-s
'I have a wife.'

In the rest of the paper I will generally discuss ECs containing a locative coda without making any explicit assumption on its status as argument vs. adjunct (cf. again Francez 2007: 17–25 for a detailed discussion of the theoretical options), but taking for granted the question of the developmental pattern as depicted by Heine. Finally, towards the end of the paper I will come back to the question of the possible developments of ECs as suggested by the example from Bisa.

3.1 Types of particles

The particles involved in ECs are typically deictic, in the double sense of this expression which generally “includes some reference to a grounded element within its scope of predication” (Langacker 1987: 126). In fact, the grounded element can be very concretely present in the utterance context or more abstractly available in the discourse. Given their deictic nature, I will use henceforth the term d(eictic)-PART(icle)s.² Accordingly, I will distinguish two different source types for d-PARTs, namely those which are reference-based and typically presuppose a spatial (even ostensive) dimension, and those which are discourse-based and presuppose a textual, phoric perspective. The former type, exemplified respectively by the variety of Sardinian spoken in Orgosolo (cf. Bentley 2011: 122), Italian and English, goes back to pure spatial deixis and is notoriously the most preferred source:

- (11) a. Reference-based deictic:
 Orgosolo *In qustu qaminu b'at duos tzilleris.*
 Sardinian in this:M street there-has two bars
 Italian *In questa strada ci sono due bar.*
 in this:F street there are two bars
 English *In this street there are two bars.*
- b. Sard. *bi* < Lat. *ibi* 'there'
 It. *ci* < Lat. *ecce hīc* 'here here'
 Eng. *there* < Old Eng. *þær* 'there'

The grammaticalization of the deictic marker generally takes place via a mechanism of clitic doubling, which makes the locative expression redundant, and subsequently easily

2. I adopt the small letter d(eictic) in order to avoid any confusion with the current usage of the capital D to indicate a determiner.

dropped. For instance, Ciconte (2008, 2010) shows for older stages of Italian – actually, Tuscan which substantially differs from other old vernaculars – that in texts dating from XIII to XIV century the d-PART *ci* did not show up obligatorily in ECs (12a) as is the case in Modern Italian, and could not co-occur with a locative phrase (12b), which demonstrates that *ci* (or *vi*, going back to Lat. *ibi*, which stands in free variation with *ci*) retained its locative value at that stage (12c–d), see Ciconte (2008, 2010:51) for the details:

- (12) a. *Era una guasca in Cipri*
 was a:F:SG Gascon:F:SG in Cyprus
 ‘There was a woman from Gascony in Cyprus’
 (Novellino, LI, p. 60)
- b. (*C’) *Era una guasca in Cipri*
 there-was a:F:SG Gascon:F:SG in Cyprus
- c. *v’era dovizia*
 there-was abundance
 ‘There was abundance’
 (Novellino, LXXXV, p. 97)
- d. *v’era dovizia (*in Cipri)*
 there-was abundance in Cyprus
- e. *E non v’era erba in niuno luogo*
 and not there-was grass in no place
 ‘And there was no grass in any place’
 (Tuscan *Navigatio*, 7, f. 8r, p. 73)
- f. *V’era la stanza di San Brandano*
 there-was the room of Saint Brendan
 ‘There was the room of Saint Brendan’
 (Tuscan *Navigatio*, 3, f. 4v, p. 51)

Only in texts of the XVI century the d-PART may co-occur with a locative phrase (12e), which is a clear signal of its grammaticalization as a d-PART in the EC (12f).

The other possible source of d-PARTs is provided by discourse-referring deictic markers, typically 3rd person pronouns, generally used as dummy subjects in the respective languages (cf. Freeze 2001:949):

- (13) Discourse-based deictic:
- a. Icel. *það eru mys í baðkerinu.*
 that are mice in bathtub:DEF
 ‘There are mice in the bathtub.’
- b. Swed. *Det fanns inget postkontor i den byn.*
 it find:PST:PASS no postoffice in that town
 ‘There was no postoffice in that town.’

- c. French *Il y a trois enfants ici.*
 it there has three children here
 ‘There are three children here.’

Apart from the concomitant presence of the d-PART *y* in the French EC, to which we return below, in these cases the source construction goes back to a demonstrative, resp. Old Norse *þat* ‘that’ for Icelandic and Swedish and Lat. *ille* ‘that’ for French, which only indirectly (i.e. on a phoric base) serves (spatial) deixis. However, in Icelandic, Swedish and French these d-PARTs are also normally observed as dummy subjects for instance with meteorological verbs:

- (14) Icel. *Það rignidi.*
 Swed. *Det harregnat.*
 French *Il pleuvait.*
 ‘It rained.’

Generalizing somewhat on this, we can make the empirically testable prediction that there should not be any EC containing a discourse-based d-PART in those languages in which no dummy subjects are required. In other words, we expect that in these cases the phoric marker should be already grammaticalized as a dummy subject independently of the EC.

Such an expectation corroborates the hypothesis that only d-PARTs arising in the locative constructions are favored candidates for forming ECs independently of their general status in the rest of a language. Other types of d-PARTs occurring in ECs arise parasitically from their normal employment as d-PARTs. Thus, the latter are only expected if the language normally uses d-PARTs. This hypothesis descends naturally from the cognitive primacy of the locative onomasiological format as a source for ECs. Furthermore, it does not exclude that in languages making normal use of d-PARTs also a reference-based d-PART may be grammaticalized in ECs, as is the case for French. In fact, in this language the dummy subject is accompanied by the deictic d-PART *y* (13c), which goes back to Lat. *ibi*, thus combining the two different source types:

- (15) d-PART₁ d-PART₂ PRED ENTITY

This is apparently due to the parasitic occurrence of the discourse-based d-PART, which is normally required in French when no overt subject occurs. This state of affairs can be seen as the result of multiple sources of grammaticalization, because the French EC turns out to display both a deictic d-PART₂ coming from an original locative construction and a discourse-based d-PART₁ which goes back to the independent grammaticalization of the 3rd person pronoun as a dummy subject.

3.2 Types of predicates

In general, the predicates (= PREDs) involved in ECs are also deictic, or at least offer the possibility of collocating the referents spatially, in a direct or indirect way, i.e. inferentially (cf. Ricca 1993 for a broader, typological view on verbal deixis). This does not mean, however, that PREDs involved in ECs have to be searched only among the so-called “locative” predicates like BE, LIE, STAND, etc. In fact, the diachronic sources of PREDs can be quite various coming potentially from any semantic field, even though the locative domain is dominant.

For this reason, I prefer to tackle the question of the source PREDs in semantic terms by grouping the verbs according to their semantic features. In this respect, PREDs can have two different source lexemes, namely static and dynamic verbs.³ The former may be intrinsically deictic like typical locative verbs of the type BE, EXIST, SIT, etc., which represent the preferred source domain of PREDs:

- (16) Stative, intrinsically deictic verbs:

Japanese *Kono kyooshitsu-ni denki dokei-ga arimasu.*
 this classroom-DAT electric clock-NOM is
 ‘There is an electric clock in the room.’

Anc. Greek *Egys ēsan hoi hoplitai*
 nearby were the:M:PL soldiers
 ‘There were soldiers nearby.’

Tagalog *May mga tao sa labas.*
 exist PL person LOC outside
 ‘There are people outside.’

Ulwa *Waspah kau was isau lau ka.*
 well in water much sit EVID
 ‘In a well, there is much water.’

3. Other parameters may be of relevance for the selection of the PRED type. For instance, in Puyuma (see Ross & Teng 2005 for details), two different PREDs are selected for the EC as well as for the locative and possessive construction in dependence of the affirmative (a) or negative (b) value of a sentence:

- (a) *Ulaya a paisu.*
 exist NOM:INDEF money
 ‘There’s money’.
- (b) *Unian Da paisu.*
 NEG:exist OBL:INDEF money
 ‘There’s no money’.

Given their sentence-level scope, similar parameters will not be taken further into consideration in this paper, which focuses on the variety of (lexical) sources for ECs.

In Japanese (cf. Freeze 2001:941) and in Ancient Greek the EC is clearly identified by means of the specific word order which deviates from the unmarked order because the LOC precedes the ENTITY (cf. Jap. *Denki dokeiga kono kyooshitsuni arimasu* 'An electric clock is in the room'; similar examples are attested for Ancient Greek). In Tagalog (cf. Sabbagh 2009:678), a predicate-initial language, the PRED *may* is specific for the ECs and cannot be used to normally predicate a property with regard to an ENTITY. Thus, for instance the locative predication is accomplished simply by putting the locative expression in the predicate-initial position in the absence of a copula (Schachter & Otanes 1972:65):

- (17) *Nasa kusina ang mesa.*
 in kitchen the table
 'The table is in the kitchen.'

Given the occurrence of an EC containing the specific PRED *may*, Tagalog behaves in the opposite way with regard to both Japanese and Ancient Greek, in which the EC results from the manipulation of the basic word order so that the locative expression is topicalized while the ENTITY is newly introduced into the discourse. This is due to the initial position of the predicate displayed by Tagalog: the locative expression is therefore not topicalized and no presentative effect is obtained for the ENTITY. In fact, in an SVO language like Chinese, in which similar to Tagalog no overt copula occurs, the so-called non-verbal (presentative and) EC results from the topicalization of LOC (cf. Tao 2007):

- (18) a. *San ge ren wuli.*
 three CL person house:inside
 'Three people are in the house'.
 b. *Wuli san ge ren.*
 house:inside three CL person
 'There are three people in the house'.

Finally in Ulwa (cf. Koontz-Garboden 2010), the EC is based on the posture verb *lau* 'to sit', which is clearly grammaticalized as shown by the following sentence in which the grammaticalized *lau* is asserted of the woman at the same time as the full verb *lau* is denied without giving rise to a contradiction:

- (19) *Yaka yal-ka ya baka-ka makdâ-t-i lau ka, katka lau*
 that woman-3SG the child-3SG watch-VCM-SS⁴ sit EVID but sit
 at-sa/sa. Asna suh-p-i sâk ka.
 be-NEG/NEG clothes wash-VCM-SS stand EVID
 'There's that woman who's watching (lit.: That woman is sitting watching)
 her child, but she's not sitting. She's standing, washing clothes.'

4. vcm stands for verb class marker, while ss stands actually for a marker which signalsizes that the same subject is referred to. Finally, the EVID marker *ka* conveys evidentiality. For details, cf. Koontz-Garboden (2010).

As already pointed out above discussing Freeze's approach, locative constructions are also commonly associated with possessive constructions via an inference whereby something which is close to me is at my disposal or simply belongs to me (cf. Heine 1997: 50 among many others). Thus, it does not come out as a surprise to observe that ECs are often similar or even identical to possessive constructions. A case in point is Finnish, in which the same construction encodes both the EC and the possessive relation:

- (20) a. *Pöydä-llä on kynä.*
 table-ADE is pencil
 'There is a pencil on the table.'
- b. *Liisa-lla on mies.*
 Lisa-ADE is man
 'Lisa has a man.'
- c. *Talo-lla on oma kylpyhuone.*
 house-ADE is own bathroom
 'The apartment has its own bathroom/There is an own bathroom in the apartment.'

Basically, in Finnish the construction containing a topicalized locative expression, a copula and an entity is contextually to be interpreted either as an EC or as a possessive construction, depending on the specific properties instantiated in the sentence. The possessive interpretation is more natural when the locative expression contains a human, or more generally an animate referent as in (20b) in contrast to (20a) (cf. Freeze 2001:943). However, when the context does not force either interpretation, both readings are possible as in (20c) (Emilia Aaltonen, p.c.). In this case, the existential interpretation will be preferred over the possessive one if the ENTITY being introduced receives a particular focus within the general discourse in which the sentence occurs.

In these cases, both the existential and the possessive construction go back to locative constructions, thus sharing the same source of the static deictic PREDs. But an EC may also go directly back to a possessive construction via the reversal of the inference seen above: namely something which can be possessed exists. Given that possessive constructions may also involve HAVE/HOLD predicates (cf. Heine's 1997: 47 Action Schema), this is reflected in ECs (21a–c) – in respectively Modern Greek (Katherina Stathi, p.c.), Old Italian (Ciconte 2010:58) and Serbo-Croat (Hartmann 2008:226) – which may also involve d-PARTs (21d–e):

- (21) a. Mod. Greek *Ēxi polí kósmo sto kédro.*
 has much people in:DEF center
 'There are a lot of people in the city center.'

- b. Old Italian *Nelle parti di Grecia ebbe un signore*
 in:DEF parts of Greece have:PST:3SG a sir
 ‘Somewhere in Greece there was a sir’
 (Novellino, III, p. 15)
- c. Serbo-Croat *Ima nekih studenata (ovde) koji hoće*
 has some students:GEN here who want
samo diplomu.
 just certificate
 ‘There are some students (here) who just want the certificate.’
- d. French *Il y a des livres ici.*
 it there has some:PL books here
 ‘There are some books there.’
- e. Mexican *Habian muchos problemas.*
 Spanish have:PST:3PL many problems
 ‘There were many problems.’
- f. Brazilian *Tem muitos livros na biblioteca.*
 Portuguese holds many books in:DEF library
 ‘There are many books in the library.’

Observe that in the Mexican variety of Spanish (in contrast to the Iberian variety: *Habia* (/ **Habian*) *muchos problemas*, cf. Koch 2003) the PRED displays agreement with the ENTITY, which accordingly turns out to be categorized as a subject. We will come back to this question in the next section.

In Brazilian Portuguese (cf. Avelar 2009), in which the source verb for HOLD *ter* is going to replace *haver* in all usages, including its occurrence in grammaticalized functions (cf. *Ele tem ido à escola*. ‘He has – lit. holds – gone to school’), the role played by the possessive construction is so pervasive that besides the Action Schema also the so-called Companion Schema (cf. Heine 1997: 54), normally used to encode possession, may be utilized to express existence:

- (22) a. *João tem / ‘tá com um carro.*
 João holds / is with a car
 ‘João has a car’.
- b. *Hoje tem / ‘tá com muita gente na praia.*
 today holds / is with much people in:DEF beach
 ‘There are many people on the beach today’.

Apart from French, in which the PRED agrees with the d-PART functioning as a subject as discussed above, in the other cases in (21) the PRED displays the form of the 3rd person singular, even though there is no third singular nominal or expletive.

In some cases – for instance in Old Italian – can be shown to be in correlation with the possible occurrence of a d-PART *egli* similar to French *il* (cf. Ciconte 2010: 20):

- (23) a. *Elli v' à millitucedentidoy ysole nello mare*
 it there-has thousand:two:hundred:two isles in:DEF sea
de levante
 of Levant
 'There have one thousand two hundred and two isles in the east sea'
 (*Sidrac*, 14v, 18, p. 240)
- b. *egli ha gran pezza che io a te*
 it has great piece that I to you
venuta sarei
 come:PST:PTCP be:PST:COND:1SG
 '(there) happens to have been a great while that I would have come to you'
 (i.e., 'I've been meaning to come to you for a long time')
 (*Decameron*, II, 5, 28, p. 125)
- c. *Et si elli acadesse che 'l priore che sirà ...*
 and if it happen:PST:SUBJ:3SG that the prior who be:FUT:3SG
 'And if it happened that the prior who will be...'
 (*Disciplinati di sant'Antonio*, 12r., xxviii, 9–10, p. 129)

In the other cases, in which no such an expletive can be shown to have occurred, the third person singular has to be put anyway in connection with the usage of the PRED after a discourse-based deictic pronoun of the type discussed above. In fact, independently of its grammaticalized status as a true d-PART, such a pronoun may be co-referent for instance with a sentence occurring earlier or later in the text as in the Old Italian Examples (23b–c) above.

In this way, the subject position, normally associated with the topic function, turns out to be empty and the pronoun, whether it is grammaticalized as obligatory in a language like French or not like in Old Italian, acquires the status of a sort of topic marker signalling the presentation of a new topic coming into existence. By the some token, the ENTITY comes into the focus of the attention and presents peculiar semantic traits like the indefiniteness effect repeatedly discussed in the literature (cf. Francez 2007, McNally to appear for a survey).⁵

5. In this regard see already the illuminating remarks of Jespersen [1924] (1992: 154): "In connection with what has been said above about the subject of a sentence being more special and more definite than the predicative, we may mention the disinclination to take as a subject a word with the indefinite article, except when this is meant as the "generic" article designating the whole species, which is really a definite idea. Instead of beginning a story in this way: "A tailor was once living in a small house," etc., it is much more natural to begin: "Once upon a time there

From the diachronic viewpoint adopted in this paper, the case of Brazilian Portuguese is interesting (cf. Mattos e Silva 1994:73), because it represents the change from a possessive construction also involving a deictic element like in French and Sardinian to a bare possessive construction like in Modern Greek and Serbo-Croat:

- (24) LOC PRED_{HAVE} ENTITY > PRED_{HAVE} ENTITY
- a. *Há um gato no tapete.*
 has a cat in:DEF mat
 ‘There is a cat on the mat’
- b. *não ha i segredo*
 not has there secret
 ‘There is no secret’

The modern usage shown in (24a), which is being replaced by the variant containing the PRED *ter* (cf. (21f) above), results from the loss of the LOC, which is still attested in an example from the 16th century (24b). This points to an advanced stage of grammaticalization or conventionalization of the construction, in which the spatial dimension is strongly backgrounded as a consequence of the dropping of the LOC.

Finally, among the stative PREDs we also observe cases of inferentially deictic usages, which are then grammaticalized in an EC. For instance, in Medieval Chinese the predicate for SEE is used (cf. Tao 2007):

- (25) *dishang jian jinguang yi dao fenming ren shi yi ge*
 ground:up see golden:light one CL clear recognize COP one CL
xiao she’er die qi cun
 small snake long seven inch
 ‘There was a bright golden ray of light on the ground, which was a small snake about seven inches long.’

This construction is often used to introduce new referents into a discourse, i.e. with a presentative value. Here the existential (i.e. also physical, spatial) meaning is inferred via an abstract entity (generally backgrounded as in the Chinese example above) which “sees” the ENTITY coming on the stage. Similar inferentially deictic strategies can be found in other languages as well, for instance in the following

was a tailor,” etc. By putting the weak *there* in the place usually occupied by the subject we as it were hide away the subject and reduce it to an inferior position, because it is indefinite”. Similar observations hold also true for the HAVE predicate and its subject discussed here.

English example elicited from the web, which can be easily paraphrased with the help of an EC:

- (26) a. *The end of 1997 could see at least one vendor reaching 5GB of capacity.*
 b. *At the end of 1997 there was at least one vendor reaching 5GB of capacity.*

Let us move to the more complex case of PREDs involving a change of state in their inherent semantics and are grammaticalized so as to give rise to ECs, which by their inner character depict a static state of affairs. To comply with this, the source predicates turn out to focus on their resultant, telic state, while the dynamic part of their *Aktionsart* component is backgrounded. For instance, in the following Modern Greek (Katherina Stathi, p.c.) and Swedish ECs the PRED goes back to a typical achievement like FIND, which is intrinsically deictic given that it has to do with the direct spatial collocation of an entity:

- (27) a. *Sto páno ráfi vrískete éna mavro vivlío.*
 on:DEF upper shelf find:PRS:PASS:3SG a black book
 ‘On the upper shelf there is a black book.’
 b. *O Janis vrískei to vivlío sto ráfi.*
 the John find:PRS:3SG the book on:DEF shelf
 ‘John finds the book on the shelf.’
 c. *Det finns en bok på hyllan.*
 it find:PASS a book on shelf:DEF
 ‘There is a book on the shelf.’
 d. *Fred finner en bok på hyllan.*
 Fred finds a book on shelf:DEF
 ‘Fred finds a book on the shelf.’

Notice that in both cases the EC parasitically results from the so-called “middle-passive” usage of the verbal suffixes, respectively *-ete* for Modern Greek and *-s* for Swedish. These suffixes are normally used to form the passive as well as a number of other constructions including the anticausative, the reflexive construction, etc. (cf. Lekakou 2005: 13–15 for Modern Greek & Teleman 2002: 1614 for Swedish). Thus, the backgrounding of the (agentive) subject of the verb FIND takes place via the passive or anticausative construction. Notice that in Swedish the d-PART also occurs, which may potentially raise some question as to the argument structure of the verb *finn* ‘find’, given that, as said above, the passive suffix *-s* normally backgrounds the subject. However, in this case we simply have in Swedish the generalization of the dummy subject in the first sentence position. In fact, we also find it in cases like *Det hänger en blå rock i garderoben* ‘lit. It hangs a black rock in the garderobe’, in which a dummy subject occurs in concomitance with a postverbal subject (cf. Börjars & Vincent 2005).

Clearly, in such cases the dynamic part of the event described by the PRED has to be completely backgrounded so that only a static relation is predicated. Given the deictic nature of the resultant state portrayed by these verbs, it is not difficult to

figure out what kind of meaning extension gives rise to the EC. In this perspective, a much more complex case of a PRED grammaticalized in an EC is found in German, in which the PRED used for predicating the existence of an entity is the verb for GIVE:

- (28) a. *Es gibt viele Kinder in der Schule.*
 it gives many children in the:DAT:SG school
 ‘There are many children in the school’.
- b. *Es gibt einen Gott.*
 it gives a:ACC:SG god
 ‘There is a/one god’.

In fact, the deictic relation described by this dynamic predicate is only inferentially of a locative nature, in that it refers to a change of location of an entity, whose existence is inferred via this abstract movement. In other words, the abstract movement triggering the inference consists of the coming into existence of an entity as a consequence of a number of premises introduced earlier in a discourse. Such a causative reading of GIVE is commonly observed in several languages (cf. Newman 1996 for a survey). One further problem connected with this meaning extension, however, has to do with the backgrounding of the third argument usually involved with GIVE, namely the recipient. Accordingly, the abstract movement loses the component of change of location and is assimilated to a causative meaning of creation. This interpretation was already suggested by Grimm (1837:266), who connected the rise of the causative meaning with the occurrence of favorable circumstances introduced earlier into the discourse:

- (29) *Das Wetter ist sehr günstig: das – es gibt gute Ernte.*
 ‘The weather is very favourable: this – it gives good harvest’.

Starting with this causative extension, Newman (1998) reconstructs an inferential path which gives rise in four steps to the grammaticalization of the EC. Empirical evidence in favor of this grammaticalization process unequivocally comes from a text originating in the West-Franconian territory of the German dialectal area (precisely in Strasbourg) in the third quarter of the XVI century (appeared in 1575). From this text, namely Johann Fischart’s *Geschichtklitterung* (= FG), which is quite a free adaptation of Rabelais’ *Gargantua*, the examples given below are drawn:

- $X_{\text{NOM}} \text{ gibt } \{Z_{\text{DAT}}\} Y_{\text{ACC}}$
 There is a causal relationship between some entity X and the emergence of another entity Y (Note: the recipient Z is left implicit / dropped).

- (30) a. *wann nur alte Weiber unnd die Hund dran seychten, so gebs guten Burgundischen Saltpeter* (FG 125, 37–38)
 ‘having just old women and dogs urinate on it would produce good Burgundy saltpetre’

- *Es gibt* Y_{ACC}
There is some entity Y which will exist subsequent to the event described by the antecedent clause.
- b. *sonst wo die Erd sich zwischen Sonn und Mon einlegt, so gibts finsternuß* (FG 99, 13–14)
‘normally where the earth positions itself between the sun and the moon, then that will lead to darkness’
- *Es gibt* Y_{ACC}
There is some entity Y which will exist subsequent to the prior events.
- c. *O wie ernsthaft betten gibt es alsdann für ihn, daß er wider gesund heimkomme* (FG 103, 4–5)
‘Oh what intense praying it [the husband leaving the house] will lead to the event that he may return home safely’
- *Es gibt* Y_{ACC}
Y exists.
- d. *Dann es gibt gestolene Kind* (FG 88, 6–7)
‘For there are stolen children ...’

The path of grammaticalization of the construction proceeds as long as the causative source is eclipsed in the discourse.

Not far from Strasbourg, where the Modern German EC seems to have had birth, there is another dialectal variety, namely Lëtzebuergesch, the city dialect of Luxembourg, in which *ginn*, the verb for GIVE, appears not only in the EC (31a), but also as auxiliary in a number of other constructions as a fientive copula (31b), in the passive (31c), and in the subjunctive construction (31d) (cf. Krummes 2004; Gaeta 2005, 2010):

- (31) a. *Et gött eng Universitét zu Berlin.*
it gives a university to Berlin.
‘There is a university in Berlin.’
- b. *Wann ech grouss si, ginn ech Pilot.*
when I big am give I pilot.
‘When I’m big, I’m going to be a pilot.’
- c. *De Kichelchen gött vu mir giess.*
the biscuit gives by me:DAT eaten.
‘The biscuit is being eaten by me.’
- d. *Wann ech Zäit hätt, géif ech bleiwen.*
when I time have:PST:SUBJ give:PST:SUBJ I stay:INF
‘If I had time, I would stay.’

Furthermore, the verb *ginn* is also normally used as a full verb:

- (32) *Ech ginn der e Buch.*
I give you:DAT a book
'I give you a book.'

How can this accumulation of different usages be explained which seem to have very little in common? To shed some light on this apparently chaotic state of affairs, one further observation is of relevance. Except for the usage in the EC, a synchronic equivalence is observed between Lëtzebuergesch *ginn* and the German verb *werden* 'become', in that in German the latter is normally used in the three constructions seen above:

- (33) a. *Es gibt eine Universität in Berlin.*
it gives a:ACC university in Berlin
'There is a university in Berlin.'
- b. *Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Pilot.*
when I big am become I pilot
'When I'm big, I'm going to be a pilot.'
- c. *Der Keks wird von mir gegessen.*
the:NOM biscuit becomes by me:DAT eaten
'The biscuit is being eaten by me.'
- d. *Wenn ich Zeit hätte, würde ich bleiben.*
when I time had:SUBJ became:SUBJ I stay:INF
'If I had time, I would stay.'

In other words, the Lëtzebuergesch has generalized the verb for GIVE in the place where German makes use of the fientive verb *werden*.⁶ Independently of the origin of the "polygrammaticalization" of the latter, which is still highly controversial (cf. Szczepaniak 2009: 139–152 for a broader picture), we clearly observe the overlapping between the coverage of German *werden* and the Lëtzebuergesch *ginn*. In this regard, one plausible assumption is that the Lëtzebuergesch verb for GIVE must have developed a fientive meaning which is at the heart of its expansion in the several constructions seen in (31). Here the problem mentioned above with regard to the argument structure is even more complex, given that the verb *ginn* in its normal usage displays an agentive nominative-marked subject, a dative-marked recipient as an indirect object, and an

6. As for the other usage of German *werden* in the future construction, it must be added that in Lëtzebuergesch the future is realized with the help of the present indicative (cf. Krummes 2004).

accusative-marked direct object which changes location as a consequence of the action of the agentive subject (cf. (32) above).

Again, the answer to this question can be found in Fischart's text mentioned above. In fact, a slightly different series of implicatures can be reconstructed, which starts from the same basic meaning extension and leads to the fientive development:

- $X_{\text{NOM}} \text{gibt } \left[\begin{smallmatrix} Z_{\text{DAT}} \\ \text{DAFF} \end{smallmatrix} \right] Y_{\text{ACC}}$
There is a causal relationship between some entity X and the emergence of another entity Y (Note: the recipient Z is left implicit/dropped).
- (34) a. *wann nur alte Weiber unnd die Hund dran seychten, so gebs guten Burgundischen Saltpeter* (FG 125, 37–38)
'having just old women and dogs urinate on it would produce good Burgundy saltpetre'
- $X_{\text{NOM}} \text{gibt } Y_{\text{ACC}}$
There is a causal relationship between some entity X and the emergence of another entity Y, which represents a natural expansion of X.
- b. *spannen sie tücher oben in auf die dächer, dasz sie in der mitte herab hangen und einen sack geben* (DWB, 1702)
'they stretch the sheets over on the roof, so that they hang in the middle and form a sack'
- $X_{\text{NOM}} \text{gibt } Y_{[\text{x}]\text{ACC}}$
A new entity/property Y_x comes about, which is conceived as the development of (natural) properties of X.
- c. *verzicht mir, daß ich euch den Säuen vergleich, sie geben dennoch guten Speck* (FG 56, 30–31)
'pardon me that I compare you to sows, but they do produce good bacon'
- $X_{\text{NOM}} \text{gibt } Y_{[\text{x}]\text{ACC}}$
X becomes Y_[x].
- d. *Geltet ihr Fronecken, welche nit gern spinnen, die geben gute Wirtin?* (FG 135, 29–30)
'Isn't it so that your girls who don't like to spin will make good innkeepers?'

The crucial context is given by those passages in which the causative meaning of creation focuses on an effected object which results from the natural expansion of the subject (34b), also in meronymic terms (34c). From here the door is open for

the fientive extension, also because of the decay of the inflectional markers clearly signalling the different syntactic roles.

The parallel grammaticalization of the same construction following two different paths gives rise to a synchronic effect of layering. However, the diachronic perspective makes sense of the apparently chaotic synchronic distribution. Again, this is captured fairly well by the semasiological approach which looks at how constructions evolve diachronically.

An onomasiological approach simply has to accept the synchronic overlapping, possibly making appeal to some abstract common feature to suggest a unifying account. Even worse, the source construction, namely the verb for GIVE, is quite far from the locative construction postulated as universal in Freeze's onomasiological format. From the Lëtzebuergesch (and partially German) point of view, this format does not say anything relevant regarding the essence of the EC and its relation to the multifarious domain of constructions containing the verb for GIVE. Notice that the German state of affairs is completely neglected also in Clark's (1978) investigation surveyed above, which only mentions the simple BE-construction containing a locative expression. As revealed by Bonhoeffer's saying chosen as epigraph to this paper, the copula construction cannot predicate the existence in a strict sense, i.e. in the absence of a coda:

- (35) a. *Einen Gott, den es gibt, gibt es nicht.*
 a:ACC God REL:ACC it gives gives it not
 'There is no God which exists'.
 b. **Ein Gott ist / *Ist ein Gott.*
 a:NOM God is is a:NOM God
 c. *Es ist ein Gott / Ein Gott ist es.*
 it is a:NOM God a:NOM God is it
 'It is a/one God'.

This is confirmed by the ungrammaticality of (35b) in contrast with the normal (ascriptive, cf. Lyons 1977:472) copula construction in (35c), which reminds us of the similar opposition seen above in (6) regarding the Italian EC as opposed to the normal copula construction.

3.3 Types of ENTITY

A final question concerns the properties of the ENTITY involved in ECs. Much has been said about its indefinite character (cf. Francez 2007, McNally to appear), which however does not exclude a restricted number of well-defined exceptions. One such case has been already surveyed above, namely the Example (19) from Ulwa containing

what Francez (2007:98) calls a fake definite, namely an ENTITY which is “formally definite but semantically equivalent to an indefinite”.

At any rate, it should be considered that the dichotomy definite/indefinite should be studied in the context of how such a feature is encoded in a certain language, which may have a number of interesting consequences on the form of the ECs. For instance, in Puyuma, an ergative-absolutive language (cf. Ross & Teng 2005), the subject must be definite and the verb is marked as for the feature [\pm transitive] (36a–b). The presence of an indefinite patient triggers the antipassive construction (36c) in which a definite agent is advanced to the subject role while the indefinite patient is oblique-marked, rendering the sentence intransitive:⁷

- (36) a. *tu=tusuk-aw na Lutung kan walegan*
 GEN:3SG=pierce-TR1 NOM monkey OBL:SG Walegan
 ‘Walegan speared the monkey.’
- b. *sa-senay i walegan*
 <INTR>PROG-sing NOM:SG Walegan
 ‘Walegan is/was singing.’
- c. *tusuk i walegan Da Lutung*
 <INTR>pierce NOM:SG Walegan OBL:INDEF monkey
 ‘Walegan speared a monkey.’

In the EC the entity involved has to be indefinite; accordingly, the sentences are subjectless, and the occurring noun phrases are marked either as an indefinite nominative in the affirmative variant (37a), or as an indefinite oblique in the negative one (37b). This stands in neat contrast with the locative sentences, in which the definite noun phrase consistently plays the subject role (37c–d):⁸

7. In spite of the ergative-absolutive character of the language, Ross and Teng (2005) adopt in their notation reproduced here the terms NOM and OBL to indicate respectively the absolutive (or the patient) and the ergative (or the agent) in a transitive sentence. This may create a certain confusion in the reader because in the antipassive construction (36c) the indefinite patient is OBL-marked while the definite agent receives nominative (i.e. absolutive) marking and plays the subject role.

8. As argued by Ross and Teng (2005:144), “[s]ince copula constructions are intransitive, and the intransitive verbal construction may have an indefinite subject, one might argue that the complement of *ulaya* is a subject. But this would be terminological quibbling which would make no difference to the description of the construction. It would also introduce a complication into the analysis by making it the only Puyuma construction that **must** have an **indefinite** subject (transitive constructions must have a definite subject)” [original emphasis].

- (37) a. *ulaya a paisu*
 EXIST NOM:INDEF money
 ‘There’s money’.
- b. *unian Da paisu*
 NEG:EXIST OBL:INDEF money
 ‘There’s no money’.
- c. *ulaya ku=paisu i papaTaran*
 EXIST NOM:1SG=money LOC table
 ‘My money is on the table’.
- d. *unian ku=paisu i papaTaran*
 NEG:EXIST NOM:1SG=money LOC table
 ‘My money is not on the table’.

In the rest of this section, I will limit my observations to the formal trait of case-marking, which – from a semasiological point of view – is strictly connected with the source construction. In fact, the ENTITY is generally marked as nominative (or absolutive in this type of languages, cf. the example from Tagalog in (16–17) above) in the most widespread locative constructions serving as a source for the ECs. However, even in those languages in which the locative construction is at the heart of the EC, this must not necessarily be true, the ENTITY may display weak subject properties, and turns out to be marked by other cases. For instance in Russian, a minimal contrast is observed between a negated copula construction and a negated EC, in that the latter displays an ENTITY marked by the genitive case (cf. Partee & Borschev 2007):

- (38) a. *Otvet iz polka prišel.*
 answer:M:SG:NOM from regiment arrived:M:SG
 ‘The answer from the regiment has arrived’.
- b. *Prišel otvet iz polka.*
 arrived:M:SG answer:M:SG:NOM from regiment
 ‘There was an answer from the regiment’.
- c. *Otvet iz polka ne prišel.*
 answer:M:SG:NOM from regiment NEG arrived:M:SG
 ‘The answer from the regiment has not arrived’.
- d. *Otveta iz polka ne prišlo.*
 answer:M:SG:GEN from regiment NEG arrived:N:SG
 ‘There was no answer from the regiment’.

As in Japanese and Ancient Greek seen above in (16), in Russian the contrast between the normal locative construction and the EC is given by the word order (38a–b), in that the EC selects the marked verb-initial order. The corresponding negated sentence

(38d) marks the ENTITY with the genitive case and the verbal agreement is neuter, signalling that the construction is impersonal.⁹ In Finnish, a plural ENTITY occurring in an EC is generally marked by the partitive case, which also appears in rhematic position (cf. Huumo 2003):

- (39) a. *Poja-t juokse-vat piha-lla.*
 boy-PL:NOM run-PRS:3PL yard-ADE
 ‘The boys are running in the yard’.
- b. *Piha-lla juokse-e poik-i-a.*
 yard-ADE run-PRS:3SG boy-PL-PAR
 ‘There are boys running in the yard’.

As in Russian, the EC is impersonal because the verb does not agree with the ENTITY. Notice that such a partitive-marked ENTITY normally displays weak subject properties. For instance, it contrasts with a nominative-marked volitional subject in that the partitive marking apparently removes the volitional force:

- (40) a. *Professori-t tahto-i-vat tul-la kahvila-an.*
 professor-PL:NOM want-PST-3PL come-INF cafe-ILL
 ‘The professors wanted to come to the café’.
- b. *Professore-i-ta tahto-i tul-la kahvila-an.*
 professor-PL-PAR want-PST:3SG come-INF cafe-ILL
 ‘(There were) Professors (who) tended to come to (appear in) the café’.

Notice that the particular case-marking characterizing the ENTITY is not restricted to ECs, but is generally found in Russian (cf. Partee & Borschev 2007) in the case of

9. Partee and Borschev (2007) argue that in Russian the negated EC contains a presupposition of existence for the location involved when a genitive-marked ENTITY occurs, which does not hold for the locative sentence:

- (a) *Studenty ne byli na koncerte. Koncerta ne bylo.*
 students:NOM NEG were at concert. Concert NEG was
 ‘The students were not at the concert. There was no concert’.
- (b) *Studentov na koncerte ne bylo. #Koncerta ne bylo.*
 students:GEN at concert NEG was. Concert NEG was
 ‘There were no students at the concert.’

The contrast with the negated locative sentence in (a) containing a nominative-marked subject may be put in connection with the condition on indefiniteness characterizing the ENTITY involved into an EC, because this condition also presupposes the existence of a physical space in which the presented ENTITY appears. Accordingly, the occurrence of the physical space necessary for introducing a new (even inexistent!) ENTITY cannot be subsequently negated.

unprototypical subjects, namely in negated locative sentences (41a–b), and in Finnish (cf. Asbury 2008: 96) in all instances of indefinite (or better: unbounded) subjects and objects, namely either with mass nouns (41c–d) or plurals (41e–f):

- (41) a. *Kolja v Moskve.*
 Kolja:NOM in Moscow:LOC
 ‘Kolja is in Moscow’.
- b. *Koli net v Moskve.*
 Kolja:GEN NEG in Moscow:LOC
 ‘Kolja is not in Moscow’.
- c. *Purki-ssa on leipä-ä.*
 tin-INE is bread-PAR
 ‘There is some bread in the tin’.
- d. *Silja joi maito-a.*
 Silja drank milk-PAR
 ‘Silja drank some milk’.
- e. *Kadu-lla on auto-j-a.*
 street-ADE is car-PL-PAR
 ‘There are cars in the street’.
- f. *Ammu-i-n karhu-j-a.*
 shoot-PST-1SG bear-PL-PAR
 ‘I shot at the/some bears’.

On the other hand, we have seen other languages in which the source construction is different and relates to the way of encoding possession. If the source verb is of the HAVE type, the ENTITY turns out to be marked by the accusative case, as in Alemannic and more generally in the Southern variety of German (cf. Czinglar 2002 & Jespersen [1954] 1992: 156):

- (42) *I üserm Hus hot’s grad an Verruckta.*
 in our:DAT house has-it currently a:ACC lunatic
 ‘In our house there’s a lunatic right now’.

However, by virtue of the unprototypical object properties characterizing the ENTITY given that it is not really involved into a transitive construction (cf. Hopper & Thompson 1984 among many others), we expect to find a realignment with the prototypical subject properties, as in Serbo-Croat where the development of a nominative case-marking has taken place in spite of the source verb HAVE occurring in the EC (cf. Hartmann 2008: 226; Creissels 2010):

- (43) a. *Ima lijepa djevojka u ovoj kući.*
 has pretty:F:SG:NOM girl:SG:NOM in this:F:SG:LOC house:SG:LOC
 ‘There is a pretty girl in this house’.

- b. *Ima lijepih djevojaka u ovom selu.*
 has pretty:F:PL:GEN girl:PL:GEN in this:N:SG:LOC village:SG:LOC
 ‘There are pretty girls in this village.’

Notice that in Serbo-Croat the same property of the Russian ECs occurs, in that a plural subject is marked by the genitive case, thus deviating both from the accusative marking of the source construction and from the nominative marking typical of subjects. A similar realignment with prototypical subject properties has been observed above for Mexican Spanish (21e), in which the source verb HAVE involved in the EC displays agreement with the ENTITY.

Clearly, this evidence shows that the case-marking of the ENTITY parasitically descends from the case-marking of the source construction giving rise to the EC. Given the variety of the source constructions, a certain degree of variation is found, which may also be partially re-elaborated as in Serbo-Croat. Furthermore, the case-marking of the ENTITY may also profit of the general properties (or idiosyncracies) of case-marking in a given language, as in Finnish and in the Slavic languages Russian and Serbo-Croat, in which the genitive and partitive case are respectively employed. One prediction which can be made is that, in the absence of any source construction involving the dative (or the ergative) to case-mark the ENTITY, these cases are not expected to occur. This restriction on dative can be more generally put in connection with the peculiar position held in the case hierarchy (cf. Maling 2001, see also Primus 1999), which is usually linked with a specific semantic goal role, and behaves at the same time both as an unprototypical subject and as an unprototypical object. Both these properties make it improbable that a dative case turns out to mark the ENTITY involved into a source construction giving rise to an EC. A similar line of reasoning can be applied *a fortiori* to the ergative, which generally marks a definite agent and accordingly displays two properties normally absent in the ENTITY involved in an EC.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the semasiological perspective adopted through this paper has allowed us to provide a systematic typology of possible ECs with respect to their source constructions. In particular, we classified the source constructions with regard to the three basic ingredients of an EC:

- d-PART
 - reference-based deictic
 - discourse-based deictic

- PRED
 - stative
 - intrinsically deictic
 - inferentially deictic
 - dynamic
 - intrinsically deictic
 - inferentially deictic
- ENTITY
 - (in)definiteness
 - case-marking

The onomasiological perspective as adopted by Freeze (2001) – his locative paradigm – is only partially satisfactory, in that it focuses only on one single type of source constructions containing a stative, intrinsically deictic PRED, while the typology of source constructions is much more complex. In fact, the locative paradigm is not able to deal with cases such as German or Lëtzebuergesch, where a dynamic PRED is involved. Moreover, the onomasiological approach completely neglects the phenomenon of layering, which highlights peculiar structural features in one particular language like the multifaceted occurrence of the verb *ginn* as an auxiliary in Lëtzebuergesch.

By way of conclusion, I would like to point out two possible research avenues which naturally follow from the semasiological approach advocated in this paper. The first one concerns the possible evolutionary scenario of ECs in the light of what has been seen above in terms of the source constructions and the layering effects resulting from their grammaticalization. For instance, in Tswana the EC has given rise to a sort of prepositional phrase introducing the agent of the passive construction (cf. Creissels 1995:272):

- (44) *ηwàná ólómíl-w-è kí NḐτΣά.*
 child kill-PASS-3SG EXIST dog
 ‘The child has been killed by the dog.’

It is not difficult to figure out the route which has led from an earlier biclausal sentence containing an EC to the monoclausal structure introducing the agent of the passive sentence. Again, a crucial role has been played by the presentative function of ECs which normally predicate the (coming into) existence of a new entity. A similar perspective also pops out in the case of Bisa seen above in (10c), in which the EC has given rise to the possessive construction via an inference whereby something which exists close to me is at my disposal/belongs to me. Asking for the possible development of ECs within the functional domain of the grammar is barely possible from the point of view of the locative paradigm.

Finally, a different but complementary question which could not be dealt with in this paper concerns the semantic space covered by ECs, what in the recent typological research goes under the label of semantic maps (cf. Croft 2003: 133; Haspelmath 2003). Namely, the range of possible meanings displayed by ECs once they are grammaticalized in a given language compared to the corresponding semantic maps as reconstructed in other languages. To make just one example, Czinglar (2002: 94) emphasizes that in the German EC containing the source verb GIVE “the property depicted by the locative cannot be interpreted as an accidental property of the object”, but “forces a kind of habitual interpretation”. Accordingly, the existence at a large location often results in a “habitat” reading (cf. Newman 1996: 162), while no habitual reading is available in out-of-the-blue contexts, which therefore do not allow the EC:

- (45) a. *Es gibt viele Pferde in Kanada.*
 it gives many horse:PL in Canada
 ‘There are many horses in Canada.’
 b. *Maria, schau! Da *gibt es / ist ein Pferd in*
Maria look there gives it / is a horse in
unserem Kartoffelbeet!
 our:DAT potato:bed
 ‘Maria, look! There is a horse in our potato bed!’

Czinglar makes the point that the German EC does not allow reference to one individual situation, in neat contrast with the corresponding English (and I may add Italian) EC. On the other hand, she also contrasts the German EC which is apparently able to encode also an eventive impersonal meaning like ‘take place, happen’ (46a–b) with the corresponding Norwegian EC similar to the Swedish EC seen in (27c) above, in which such a meaning is not allowed (46c–d):

- (46) a. *Morgen wird es ein Gewitter geben.*
 tomorrow becomes it a:N:NOM storm give:INF
 ‘Tomorrow there will be a storm.’
 b. *Gestern gab es ein Erdbeben in L.A.*
 yesterday gave it a:N:ACC earthquake in L.A.
 ‘Yesterday there was an earthquake in L.A.’
 c. **I morgen vil det finnes en storm.*
 in tomorrow will this find:INF:PASS a storm
 ‘Tomorrow there will be a storm.’
 d. **I går fantes det et jordskjelv i L.A.*
 yesterday found:PASS this an earthquake in L.A.
 ‘Yesterday there was an earthquake in L.A.’

In this case, English (and Italian) seem to share company with German against Norwegian. At any rate, further research is needed in order to assess the details of these crosslinguistic commonalities and differences along the lines depicted above.

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